

its Ornithology, but the present pamphlet cannot be said to be superfluous, for we are much pleased with the clear and life-like description of the island and its inhabitants, their methods of fowling, collecting eggs, and so forth. The account of the capture of a Great Auk about 1840 is once more given from the lips of the grandson of one of the men concerned, and a complete list of the birds of St. Kilda is appended, to which the White Wagtail is an addition. A new breeding-station of the Fork-tailed Petrel was discovered by Mr. Wigglesworth on Levenish, but it is with the greatest regret that we find corroboration of the large numbers of its eggs (300-400) that are taken annually by the natives.

144. *Winge on the Fossil Birds of Denmark.*

[Om jordfundne Fugle fra Danmark. Af Herluf Winge. Vidensk. Meddel. fra den Naturh. Foren. i Kjöbenhavn, 1903, pp. 61-110, tab. 1.]

In this well-arranged memoir the author has put together a summary of what is at present known concerning the fossil birds of Denmark, which, though numerous, are all from the most recent formations. Altogether bones belonging to 65 species are recognised, nearly all of which are members of the existing avifauna. A left humerus, found by Steenstrup in 1854 in Ordrup Moss, near Christiansholm, appears to belong to one of the smaller species of *Æstrelata*. It is described and figured, along with corresponding bones of other Petrels for comparison. Many bones of *Alca impennis* are registered from various localities. A portion of a sternum of *Pelecanus crispus* is attributed to the Older Stone-age, so that the Polican certainly visited Denmark in former days.

XLIV.—*Letters, Extracts, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters addressed to "The Editors of 'The Ibis'":—

SIRS,—In 'The Ibis' for 1897, pp. 364-5, I wrote an article on the nesting of *Cassicus persicus* and other birds of the Lower Amazon. I there stated that the Japu (*Ostinops*

decumanus) employs among its building-materials in this district large quantities of a black hair-like substance, much like horsehair or delicate and elongated roots in appearance, which botanical researches, made in our Museum, had proved to be a Lichen, but of which it was not then possible to ascertain the exact scientific name. Some time afterwards Dr. v. Ihering, Director of the São Paulo Museum, wrote and told me that I was in error, and had mistaken for a Lichen what was nothing more than the fibre of the well-known Bromeliacean epiphyte *Tillandsia usneoides*. I answered him at once that such a mistake was out of the question, from the simple fact that the *Tillandsia* (well-known to me from many years' residence in Southern Brazil) was not found on the Lower Amazon. To this Dr. v. Ihering replied that here again I had made a mistake, my assertion that the *Tillandsia* did not exist on the Lower Amazon being contrary to the fact!

As may be supposed, I was rather surprised at the courage of Dr. v. Ihering in denying, without the slightest evidence, facts that were known to us on the Lower Amazon as matters of daily observation. But I was still more surprised when I found that my colleague in São Paulo, in the 'Revista do Museu Paulista' (vol. iv. pp. 195, 218), had proclaimed to the whole world my supposed errors in such terms as could not be taken otherwise than in an unfriendly sense.

It was obvious that my colleague Dr. J. Huber, Head of the Botanical Section of the Pará Museum, could not allow such an attack against his professional capacity to pass without remark. He has, therefore, written and published in the 'Boletim do Museu Paranaense' (vol. iii. pp. 328, 343) an article on the question ("Sobre os materiales do ninho do Japu"), of which I send you a copy. In this article Dr. Huber has demonstrated most clearly the incorrectness of Dr. v. Ihering's assertions respecting the nest-building materials used by the *Ostinops* in this district, and has shown by description and figures the structural differences between the supposed Lichen on the one hand and the fibres of the *Tillandsia* on the other; the only modification to be made

in my original assertion of 1897 being that the Cryptogam, to which the hair-like substance supposed to be a Lichen appertains, turns out, on further examination, to be a rhizomorph of the genus *Marasmius* and therefore not a Lichen. Dr. Huber's studies on this subject have been confirmed, it will be observed, by Herr Paul Hennings, the Mycologist of the Royal Museum of Berlin, to whom examples of the disputed substance have been furnished.

As regards the existence of *Ostinops decumanus* in the State of Pará, which Dr. v. Ihering appears to question in a recent letter addressed to me, there can really be no doubt at all. The presence of this species in many places on the Lower Amazon has been testified by well-known Naturalists of former and recent days—such as Natterer, Prince Adalbert of Prussia, and other authorities whom I need not mention. In the vicinity of Pará the Japu has been regularly seen and obtained since 1894 by the taxidermists of our Museum, and, I may add, has been personally observed by the Director. It is, in fact, found throughout the Lower Amazonian district, and in certain localities is rather a common bird, well known to everyone.

Thus, whatever may be said to the contrary, the employment of the mycelium of a species of *Marasmius* in the nests of *Ostinops decumanus* and the frequent occurrence of this bird in Lower Amazonia are two *scientific facts*, the truth of which cannot be fairly disputed.

Yours &c.,

Goeldi Museum, Pará, Brazil,
July 15th, 1903.

DR. EMIL A. GOELDI.

SIRS,—In an article "On the Eggs of the Moa," by Dr. A. B. Meyer, in the April number of 'The Ibis' (above, p. 188), there are some statements which, with your permission, I desire to correct.

In discussing the entire Moa's egg, now in the Otago University Museum (No. 2 in the article), Dr. Meyer has been misinformed as to several of the facts, which are, however, correctly stated in my brief note on the egg in the

Trans. New Zealand Institute for 1901 (p. 149), to which, it is true, he refers, but in rather a casual fashion, although it is the only authoritative account of the egg hitherto published.

The first sentence (p. 190) on this subject leads the reader to suppose that the locality in which the egg was found is uncertain: the writer appears to rely on Sir W. Buller's information, which, in several instances, is erroneous and in all cases is at any rate secondhand. The sentence runs: The egg "was found . . . in one of the Otago rivers, the Clutha or Molyneux." As a matter of fact, both these names are given to one and the same river, but are applied to different parts of its course. My note above referred to records the precise spot at which the egg was found in the river.

Again, though this is of little general importance, the "Government" had nothing whatever to do with the matter of the purchase or disposal of the egg: the egg was claimed by the Directors of the Dredging Co., who, however, to avoid litigation, permitted the finder (one of their employés) to sell it; in fact, one of the Directors purchased it from the latter for our Museum.

The specific name of the Moa, which, as I suggested, may have laid this egg, is misprinted in Dr. Meyer's article; it should read "*Euryapteryx ponderosus*"—a species described by Hutton in Trans. N.Z. Inst. vol. xxiv. p. 137.

The "rather insufficient illustration" given by me, to which Dr. Meyer refers, is a photograph, not well produced, shewing the true shape of the only perfect specimen of Moa's egg. The previously published figures, being from "reconstructions of the egg," such as those made by Mantell, or from casts of the same, are not always correct in outline. My figure seemed to be of value in this direction, and as the markings on Moa's eggs had already been accurately figured by more than one writer I did not deem it necessary to repeat the details.

"Egg 3" (p. 190).—I believe that Dr. Meyer is correct in associating the egg mentioned by his informant, Mr. Barnekow, with that referred to by me in 1901 on p. 150 of the above-mentioned article; but, as Mr. Barnekow writes

from the North Island and the egg was found in the southern part of the South Island of New Zealand (something like 500 miles away), the statement "some hundred miles" should have been "some hundreds of miles" from his place.

"Egg 5" (p. 192) is the same as "Egg 7." It belonged to Miss Turton, who was good enough to deposit it in this Museum; but, on my obtaining the complete egg (No. 2), I returned it to her. It was found at Clyde and Miss Turton lives at Queenstown, hence the confusion.

"Egg 6" (p. 192).—Mr. Hamilton informs me that the fragments in his possession "are too imperfect to be called an egg."

Many fragments of eggs of Moas are in the possession of this Museum and of various private individuals in the Colony.

I may refer here to certain fragments of a *green* egg-shell found in 1875 by Mr. T. White in a cave near Mt. Nicholas, Otago, which was identified by Capt. Hutton as that of a Moa (see Trans. N.Z. Inst. 1875, p. 101): these are now exhibited in this Museum.

Let me add another to the list of eggs given by Dr. Meyer. I have, in addition to egg No. 2, a nearly complete egg, rather larger than it, but broken at one end. It was found in the same locality as Nos. 2 and 3 and by the same individual. It was evidently laid by the same species of Moa as most of the other Otago specimens. The surface of the shell is very little corroded, and shews the typical markings much better than that described by me in 1901.

Finally, there is a misprint in Dr. Meyer's article (p. 196): the illustration given by Owen is referred to as "plate exix," which should read "xcix."

Yours &c.,

Otago University Museum,
Dunedin, N.Z.,
July 27th, 1903.

W. BLAXLAND BENHAM.

SIRS,—

In the year 1900 Mr. Harry F. Witherby contributed a very interesting article to 'The Ibis' (p. 475) on the birds of the Kola Peninsula, Russian Lapland. During our visit to that country this year we met with examples of the

following six species which do not appear to have been previously recorded by him or by others as occurring there:—

Eversmann's Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*), Sedge-Warbler (*Acrocephalus phragmitis*), Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), Rook (*Cervus frugilegus*), Hen-Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaëtus*).

Yours, &c.

HENRY PEARSON,

J. P. CHAWORTH MUSTERS.

Bramcote, Notts.

19th September, 1903.

Report of the British Museum (Natural History) for 1902.

—The Annual Report to Parliament on the progress of the British Museum contains much that is interesting concerning the great National Collection of Birds, from which we extract the following particulars:—

Among the "publications in preparation" are announced vols. iv. and v. of the 'Hand-list of Birds,' by Dr. R. Bowdler Sharpe, and vols. iii. and iv. of the 'Catalogue of Birds' Eggs'—vol. iii. prepared by Mr. E. W. Oates and Capt. Savile Reid and vol. iv. by Capt. Savile Reid. These works are of primary importance to all ornithologists and their completion is anxiously awaited.

A large series of the eggs of the Guillemot (*Uria troile*) has been placed in the "Index Museum," in order to shew the great variation in shape, ground-colour, and markings of the egg which may occur in a single species of Bird.

Under the heading "Aves" we are informed that the re-arrangement of the specimens in the Public Gallery has been "greatly retarded by want of funds." The remounting of the Birds of Prey and Owls has been completed, and many of the British Passeres have been replaced by more artistically mounted specimens. The preparation of these has been carried out by Mr. Cullingford of Durham.

The accessions to the bird-collection during the past year amounted to 8628, among which the following are mentioned as worthy of special notice:—162 birds from New Zealand and the Cook Islands, presented by the Earl of Ranfurly; 48 birds from Mashonaland, presented by Mr. J. Ffolliot Darling; 48 birds from the Sudan, presented by

Mr. R. M. Hawker; 212 birds from Nyasaland, presented by Sir Alfred Sharpe, K.C.M.G.; 68 birds from New Guinea, including examples of two species new to the Collection, presented by Capt. F. R. Barton; 485 birds and 102 eggs from Fohkien, presented by Mr. C. B. Ricketts; an example of the nearly extinct Antarctic Merganser (*Merganser australis*) from Auckland Island, presented by Lieut. Kennett Dixon, R.N.; 2220 eggs from Eastern Asia, Australia, and North America, presented by Mr. W. H. Radeliffe Saunders, C.E.; 3 specimens of the Sicilian Long-tailed Titmouse (*Acredula sicula*), presented by Mr. J. I. S. Whitaker; the types of 17 new species of birds from Mount Ruwenzori and the Toro forests, presented by Mr. F. J. Jackson, C.B.; 118 birds from the vicinity of Buenos Ayres, presented by Mr. Ernest Gibson; 32 specimens of Birds of Prey from Western Australia, presented by the Perth Museum; 617 birds from Western Yunnan, including the types of several new species, presented by Col. C. Rippon; 8 Bean and Pink-footed Geese from Holland, presented by Mr. T. M. Pike and Mr. H. Leybourne Popham; 20 birds from the Liu-kiu Islands, presented by the Hon. N. C. Rothschild; 10 birds from Australia, including an example of *Pseudogerygone tenebrosa*, presented by Mr. Robert Hall; 60 birds from the Egyptian Sudan, presented by Capt. H. N. Dunn; 46 eggs from various localities received in exchange from Mr. H. E. Dresser; 7 birds from the Caspian, including examples of *Bernicla ruficollis* and *Anser rhodorrhynchus*, received in exchange from Mr. S. Neroutcheff; 2300 birds from Ecuador, collected by the late P. O. Simons, purchased; 231 birds from Cameroon, collected by Mr. G. L. Bates, purchased; 91 birds from Harar, collected by M. P. Zaphiro, purchased; 91 birds from Cyprus, collected by Mr. C. Glassner, purchased; 87 eggs from Assam, collected by Mr. E. C. Stuart Baker, purchased; and 160 birds from the Yemen frontier, collected by Mr. C. W. Bury, purchased.

In the report of the Geological Department we are told that important bird-bones from Madagascar, received in the last "Sikora" Collection, have been registered and arranged

in drawers for future study; also that 13 bones of birds from the Santa Cruz Formation in Patagonia have been presented by Mr. C. Arthur Pearson, and that some bones of *Aepyornis* from caverns in Madagascar have been acquired.

Return of the 'Valhalla.'—The Earl of Crawford, F.R.S., returned to the Solent in August last after a successful passage round the world in the R.Y.S. 'Valhalla.' Mr. M. J. Nicoll, M.B.O.U., who accompanied him as Naturalist, and whose progress we have already recorded (*cf. supra*, p. 456), has made a collection of some 1500 specimens, which will be arranged and determined at the British Museum. The birds, with which we are immediately concerned, are about 250 in number, the short stays at the various halting-places having somewhat interfered with this branch of the Collection; but series were obtained in the Magellan Straits, Valparaiso, the Fiji Islands, and the Samoan Islands, besides the specimens collected at sea, among which are sure to be found some of considerable interest. We hope that Mr. Nicoll will be able to give us an account of his adventures and observations in this Journal.

The Meeting of American Ornithologists in California.—Both 'The Auk' and 'The Condor,' in their lately issued numbers, give accounts of the conjoint meeting in May last of the "American Ornithologists' Union" and the "Cooper Ornithological Club" in California, which appears to have been very well planned and successfully carried out. The Eastern Members of the A. O. C. assembled at Chicago, and left that city on May 3rd for San Francisco by the Santa Fé route. Halts were made at Santa Fé, at Adamana, and in the Little Colorado desert of Eastern Arizona, where the wonderful petrified forests were inspected. A "side-trip" of two days enabled the travellers to visit the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, and halts were also arranged at Hesperia (where the famous Yucca-trees were examined) and Los Angeles, where a hospitable reception was tendered to the party by the southern members of the Cooper Club. The first meeting of the two Societies was held at San Francisco on May 15th in the hall of the Academy of

Sciences of California, when Dr. C. Hart Merriam, President of the A. O. U., took the Chair; while Mr. Charles R. Keyes, of the Cooper Club, acted as Secretary. During this and the following meetings 13 papers were read, the titles of which are given in Dr. Allen's report in 'The Auk.' Among these is a remarkable essay by Mr. L. M. Loomis on the recognition of geographical varieties in Nomenclature, which is printed at full length in the same number of 'The Auk' and deserves special attention. Thirteen Eastern Ornithologists were present at the Meeting, amongst whom we observe the names of Dr. Allen, Mr. F. M. Chapman, and other well-known naturalists.

The Penguins of Gauss-land.—The Penguins of the newly discovered Gauss-berg seem to belong to the same two species as those of South Victoria Land, namely, *Aptenodytes forsteri* and *Pygosceles adeliae*. They are thus described by Dr. Drygalski (see Geogr. Journ. 1903, vol. xxii. p. 198):—"We met with two species of Penguin, the small Adelia Penguin and the Emperor Penguin. The former we noticed on our way through the pack, and for a short time in autumn (February to March) at the Station before the ice had quite come to rest, and again from November onwards when it began to get loose again. The Emperor Penguins were less common in the pack, but increased in numbers southwards towards the fixed ice, and were our constant companions at the Station throughout the year. Both shewed the same unsuspectingness of man, and only on our return voyage through the pack were they at all shy of us. They differed, however, decidedly in temperament. While the small Penguins hurried towards us full of life and movement, croaking, almost snarling like angry dogs, and barring our way as if ready to attack us, though merely acting in absolute innocence of danger, and many got among the dogs and lost their lives, the larger Penguins made off slowly with philosophical composure. They stopped before strange objects, making their presence known by trumpet-like tones or loud croaking, and only attempted to escape, if at all, when one stood close to them. Then they let them-

selves down on to the ice, and skimmed over it quickly, using their feet for propulsion, and steering with their wings. We noticed the small Penguins only in small groups, while the larger ones passed by the ship in spring and autumn in flocks numbering as many as two hundred. We found especial pleasure in watching them in the leads, whence they would spring up on to the ice, and there continue their way in a swimming posture. The spectator had need to take care that the birds, some of them as much as 75 lbs. in weight, did not strike him in springing out of the water.

“The larger Penguins were very useful to us as food, especially for the dogs. These consumed for some time three Penguins a day. The skins and fat were burned, and so saved our fuel. The consumption of the expedition amounted in all to more than five hundred Penguins. Others fell a prey to our dogs.”

The Red-cheeked Ibis in Europe.—A further article on this bird and on its former existence in Europe (*cf.* Ibis, 1898, p. 454) is given in the lately issued seventh volume of the new edition of Naumann (*Nat. Vög. Mitteleuropas*, vii. p. 199). Additional information on this interesting subject will also be found in a paper by Herr Schuster of Mainz (*Orn. Monatschr. d. Deuts. Ver. z. Schutze d. Vogelwelt*, 1902, p. 520), from which it appears that the Red-cheeked Ibis was formerly found on the high rocks on the Danube in the vicinity of Passau and Kehlheim. We agree with Herr Schuster that the best name of this bird is *Geronticus eremita*, as it is not necessary to separate it generically from *G. calvus* of South Africa. Our readers may also be referred on this subject to pp. x, 95, of Mr. A. H. Evans's translation of Turner's 'Avium . . . Historia' just issued.

Death of Capt. H. F. Francis.—In his Report on the South African Museum for the year ending Dec. 31st, 1901, which has been lately published, Mr. W. L. Selater laments the death of Capt. H. F. Francis, of Steinacker's Horse, who was killed in action on the Sabi River, in the Eastern Transvaal, towards the close of the war. His younger brother, Walter Francis, had fallen previously

when proceeding to the relief of Mafeking. The South African Museum thus lost two excellent correspondents, who had largely contributed to its collections from the Eastern Transvaal and Portuguese East Africa (*cf.* *Ibis*, 1900, pp. 111, 283).

“Their work was specially valuable, as every specimen collected was very carefully and thoroughly labelled with all the necessary details, and in addition with notes on the habits.”

Mr. W. Eagle Clarke.—We are much pleased to hear that Mr. W. Eagle Clarke, whose very successful experiences at the Eddystone Lighthouse we have had the pleasure of recording in this Journal, has obtained permission from the authorities at Trinity House to pass a month during the present season of migration on the lightship off the mouth of the Thames at the Kentish Knock, which is about 21 miles from the nearest point of land. In this position Mr. Eagle Clarke will have excellent opportunities of studying the autumnal passages of migratory birds from east to west across the German Ocean, concerning which accurate information is much required.

Twelfth Supplement to the Check-list of North-American Birds.—‘The Auk’ for July contains a new Supplement to the ‘Check-list of North-American Birds,’ prepared by the Committee of the A. O. U. The “Additions to the List and accepted Changes in Nomenclature” are more than 120 in number. We have no wish to criticize these, but may express a fear that such changes as the proposed substitution of “*Tinnunculus*” for “*Æsalon*” will create much confusion and that the revival of the (happily forgotten) generic term *Erolia* will not be generally accepted. It cannot be truly stated that Vieillot’s *Erolia variegata* refers “*unquestionably*” to the Curlew Sandpiper. Amongst the “species and subspecies not adopted,” we see three of the subspecies of *Otocorys* recently proposed by Mr. Oberholser (*cf. supra*, p. 128). There is a formidable list of names “deferred for future consideration,” so that the Committee has by no means as yet concluded its labours.